

KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Matthew 16:13-28**
“**Four Ways to Be Loyal to Jesus Christ**”

How loyal are you to Jesus Christ? He was willing to be mocked and killed for us, and so it's really sad whenever we are embarrassed to silently thank Him for a meal in public, to tell someone else about Him, or to stand by His statements in the Bible. I believe from this passage, we see four ways we can help ensure that our hearts are not deceived (Matthew 26:33-34) but are truly loyal to Him.

1: Stand up for Jesus (v13-16). First, stand up for Who Jesus is. Jesus takes a "poll," in a sense, in **Caesarea Philippi** regarding Who He is; (v14) and sadly, the correct answer isn't even listed! No, He's not just **one of the prophets** or just a good man (like **John the Baptist**); He is God. (v15) But the question isn't so much, "What does my mother or father or friend say about Jesus," but, "**But whom say ye that I am?**" The true church does not compromise on the deity and Person of Jesus Christ, as the cults do.

(v16) **Peter** often "sticks his foot in his mouth" and says things without thinking, but here, he really gets it right! He says, **Thou**, which is singular (John 3:16); **the Son** is equal with the Father (John 5:18); though having a beginning as a Son in the flesh (Hebrews 1:5), yet He never had a beginning as the Word (I John 5:7, John 1:1). Peter also brings out the exclusivity of Jesus Christ: He is the Son **of the living God**; all other so-called gods are dead and cannot save. Jesus Christ is the *only* way to heaven (John 14:6). If we claim to be loyal to Jesus Christ, we must remain firm in our doctrine regarding Who He is.

2: Be a soldier for Jesus (v17-20). Second, fight hard for Jesus in the spiritual warfare against darkness. The philosophy of man, or of **flesh and blood**, is truly lost on its own and cannot possibly get a person to heaven. God's Spirit must illuminate us. That's why it's

so important we don't get cocky in philosophy (Matthew 11:25).

(v18) Jesus gives Simon **Peter** a new name meaning "stone," which indicates that Peter, along with all other true Christians, are "lively stones" built upon the **rock** solid foundation of Jesus Christ, something Peter himself alludes to later (I Peter 2:5). Cults may claim to believe in Jesus, but it's not the *real* Jesus (II Corinthians 11:4; cf. Matthew 7:24-27). Their beliefs are on the shifting sands of evil theology. Be sure that your faith is in the rock-solid foundation of Jesus Christ of the Bible, not in some fictional, man-made, watered-down "Jesus" that exists only in the minds of men. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16).

(v19) Things **in earth** are linked with things **in heaven**; often, spiritual battles are fought through physical means (II Samuel 5:24). Each church in Revelation bears light both on earth as a candlestick, and in heaven as a star (Revelation 1:20). And so for example, when we **bind** the wicked doctrine of a wolf in the church, we are not simply fighting against a single human being; we are fighting an onslaught of demons and their influence in that church. When a rebellious teenager smuggles an evil movie into his parents' house, he's not simply bringing in a physical thumb drive; he is bringing in satanic influence. The battles over abortion and homosexuality are not just between politicians; they are between spiritual forces in our country. That's why we should pray hard and stand firm; the ramifications are deeply spiritual (see also Daniel 10:13, 20).

(v20) Amazingly, Jesus—Who had every right to "blow His own horn," so to speak—humbly asked the disciples *not* to trumpet how amazing He was (at least not yet). It would mean more if the people discovered this on their own and praised Him, which they did (Luke 19:36-40, Proverbs 27:2). We can learn a lot from Jesus' humility; often, people or ministries might have a tendency to self-promote too much, and it comes off flat or proud. Let *other* people say how amazing the facilities are, or how distinctly friendly the church is.

3: Be willing to suffer for Jesus (v21-23). Third, be willing to suffer for Jesus, and expect it. Yes, the splendor and celebration awaiting those of us who are "more than

conquerers" through Jesus Christ is coming (Romans 8:37)! But being a Christian also involves painful **suffering** in this life. We must **shew** this truth to the world, as Jesus did, rather than offering an unbiblical gospel promising prosperity here and now (Acts 14:22, II Timothy 2:12).

(v22) In response to this truth, **Peter** is very rude, even **rebuking** Jesus. After a great spiritual victory (as Peter just had), we must be extra careful, because Satan will mount an intense attack of pride. People who tend to speak their minds like Peter should remain bold in saying what is right, which is a character strength; but they must also be careful to ask God to set a guard on their mouth (Psalm 141:3, Proverbs 29:11), as we all should.

(v23) What a shock **Peter** must have felt when Jesus turned to him and addressed **Satan**. This illustrates that spiritual warfare often plays out in physical conflicts. Satan had infiltrated Peter's mind **not** to "**savor**" (or have his "mouth water", so to speak) **the things that be of God**, such as righteousness, godliness, heaven, a relationship with Jesus Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, the riches and glories of heaven. Instead, his mouth watered at those **things** which **be of men**—glittering gold, nice palaces, fancy clothes, new cars, big houses, exquisite vacations, the "here and now." Life is too short to live for those things (II Corinthians 4:18).

Don't we hear Satan saying the same thing today? He says, "Christians can have their best life now"; "You just need to learn to fit in with the world, and life will be easier for you"; "Don't be a troublemaker; just go along with the flow." The same devil that said this to Jesus is saying it to us through many television evangelists and other hypocritical teachers. And sadly, Satan can even attack us through our friends and family; and this is why we must personally fight any demonic influence in our lives, so that we don't give him any base of operations to attack others.

4: Give your life to Jesus (v24-28).

Fourth, give your entire life to Jesus, which includes partaking of His suffering (Philippians 1:29). We **deny ourselves**; it isn't *our* life anymore, it's God's. The **cross** is so much worse than an electric chair or other ways of dying; but Jesus wants us to resign ourselves to mockery by

the world, and possible martyrdom, for Him. Fierce persecution against Christians may come to our nation at some point. But to **follow Jesus** means He's always with us through it all.

(v25) If you want to **save your life** with the attitude, "This is *my* life!", "This is living!", etc., then you **shall lose it**. We all die, and the party ends. But if you are willing to **lose your life**—not so you can proudly "earn" your way into heaven, and not for just any cause, but specifically **for Jesus' sake**—then, just as a seed is lost beneath the soil only to come back a hundred times more glorious, you **shall find it**. Through the pain and persecution, you will have real meaning and the hope of a wonderful heaven with Jesus Christ forever.

(v26) Imagine that someone **shall gain the whole world**. Incredibly, let's say he gains global control, has lots of friends and safety, and has no one fighting him to take over his power, and he lives to a long age and dies a natural death. Yet what is that in comparison to the **loss of his own soul**? That's a fool's deal. Yet very sadly, for everyone who doesn't get saved, they are forfeiting their soul for *much less*. And once death comes, the soul is lost forever; no man can **give in exchange for his soul** (Psalm 49:7).

(v27) One day, Jesus' return certainly **shall come**; and when it does, it will be just as real as the events going on right now. Let's not squander our time living only for ourselves. Speaking of pomp and circumstance, this world has nothing on **the glory** of Jesus' coming! But be sure you're ready to welcome Him; you can't hide in a crowd, as Jesus **shall reward every man**, not groups, **according to his works**.

(v28) Perhaps Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of the incredible glory of Jesus' second coming during the transfiguration.

Conclusion. Let's be loyal to Jesus Christ in these four specific ways: (1) Stand up for Him; (2) Be a good soldier for Him; (3) Be willing to suffer for Him; and (4) Hand over your life to Him. A seed given to Jesus Christ is never lost when planted; it will always sprout up far more glorious!